



## State of Connecticut

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Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Ranking Members and all who serve on the Judiciary Committee. I'm state Senator Toni Harp – I'm here to urge your unqualified support for **SB964, AN ACT CONCERNING CIVIL LIABILITY OF PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF CHILDREN WHO CAUSE PERSONAL INJURY OR PROPERTY DAMAGE.**

It is my firm belief this bill represents sound policy in a number of different subject areas: public safety, public health, crime prevention, and juvenile justice reform.

This legislation also provides economic incentives, albeit as a consequence for parents and guardians of children found responsible for real damage or injury in Connecticut. In this manner, this bill provides a *disincentive* for crimes resulting in those damaging or injurious behaviors.

In a word, those of us already supporting this bill want more involvement, greater supervision, and bottom line accountability of parents and guardians for actions of minors who are, after all, their responsibility. We don't call for enactment of this law to be meddling, burdensome or punitive; instead, we believe it will yield better behavior among at-risk children and an overall reduction in the crimes that cause personal injury and property damage.

Each of us here in this room knows very well the perils of juvenile violence, how it disproportionately impacts children of color, how *any* jail or prison time adversely impacts the educational and employment prospects for children, and how young people can become branded and stigmatized with just one stay behind bars.

The whole idea of this is to prevent that first experience in the criminal justice system – the experience that makes every single subsequent one just another chapter in the story.

When we engage parents, guardians, and other supervisory adults – and hold the parents and guardians accountable with provisions of this bill – we can help potential victims avoid the crime, we

can keep a young person on course toward a peaceful and productive life, and we can spare our criminal justice system the additional burden of administering to one more suspect, defendant, convict, and prisoner.

More than half the states have enacted some version of a parental liability law. Some have gone so far as to hold parents and guardians criminally liable – we don't propose anything as drastic as that. But in doing so, each state has acted boldly to prevent or reduce violent or delinquent behavior among juveniles.

Let's enact SB964 and join all these other states in this pointed effort to help young people, prevent crime, and preserve our criminal justice system. Thank you very much.